

Opening Statement of the Honorable Greg Walden
Subcommittee on Environment
Markup of “H.R. __, Drinking Water System Improvement Act”
July 13, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

This morning we are taking another step forward in our efforts to not only modernize America’s drinking water delivery systems, but to reauthorize lapsed funding for the programs for which this committee is responsible.

I believe today’s markup takes a bold step forward in addressing the challenges facing our aging drinking water delivery systems and supporting the American workforce that is working every day to rebuild our infrastructure.

The Discussion Draft focuses on three main principles: increasing funding to address drinking water systems’ physical needs, aiding states and utilities with compliance and operation of the drinking water program, and encouraging the wisest use of the money that is spent.

Importantly, based on the testimony we have repeatedly received, the Discussion Draft before us authorizes appropriations of \$8 billion over five years for federal capitalization grants to state drinking water loan fund programs. This funding will help communities in Oregon and across this country with projects that help to mitigate the most serious risks to health, comply with clean water and reporting requirements, and give a helping hand to our most economically distressed communities

trying to meet the public health objectives of the Safe Drinking Water Act.

The Draft also extends the requirements on the purchase of certain iron and steel products to ensure they are American made, while maintaining a competitive procurement process. I am personally excited about the provisions in this draft that look to the future with smart-technology that ensures a water system's physical integrity, real-time monitoring to prevent, detect or respond to contaminants in drinking and source water and facilitate alternate drinking water supplies from non-traditional sources.

Of course, this draft is not perfect. Some may be disappointed that the draft doesn't cover all the issues discussed at the committee's two recent hearings. I suspect we will have some amendments that improve the bill as well as some that might not yet be ready for consideration. Between now and consideration by the full committee, I invite further discussion to allow a truly deliberative process to occur, particularly on the three principles I highlighted earlier. I welcome your feedback and look forward to continuing the dialogue on this as our process moves forward.

I think this legislation can and should be a win for drinking water utilities, U.S. taxpayers, states, American workers, and most importantly American consumers.